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ABSTRACT

In every situation, many factors are involved in the choice of a particular form of address and there is usually more than one acceptable form. The setting for this study is the office of the director of a large business organization. The focus is a description of address forms used by a person holding the position of director of a committee, an ambiguous position in the organizational hierarchy. The particular factors that are significant here are status and intimacy. The ways that first names and nicknames are used within the committee office indicates that in that context, intimacy is a more important consideration in the choice of address forms than is status. A new compromise form of address, first name plus last name, was invented by the committee-director for use with the associate directors as a way of avoiding using either first name or title plus last name. Use of this particular address form is interpreted as a means of calling attention to the committee-director's ambiguous status as well as the low intimacy factor. (AMH)

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THE USE AND ANALYSIS OF UNCOMMON FORMS OF ADDRESS: A BUSINESS EXAMPLE

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THE USE AND ANALYSIS OF UNCOMMON FORMS OF ADDRESS: A BUSINESS EXAMPLE

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Introduction

The choice of an address form is determined primarily by the relationship between the speaker and the person addressed (Brown and Ford 1961: 375, Slobin, Miller and Porter 1968:289). This statement should not, however, be taken to imply that for any given situation there is only a single appropriate form of address; it is more often the case that any one of several would be acceptable. As a result, the choice of a specific one from among the possibilities can be seen as a way of conveying subtle shades of meaning. As Fielding and Fraser have said of the more general use of language: "role relationships do not completely determine the selection of particular conversational behaviors. Indeed, it is the existence of choice which allows the individual to express particular meanings by selecting a 'marked' form rather than the expected, socially prescribed form" (1978:218). In each situation there are many factors involved in the choice of a particular form of address, from such obvious facts as the relative age, status, and sex of participants, to those usually of less significance, such as whether the exchange is a greeting or not. Some of these factors have a more direct influence on the choice of address form than others, but there is rarely only one acceptable form. Rather, of the possible forms one is chosen which stresses something about the participants or their relationship which another would not have shown as well.[1]

In some studies the assumption seems to be made that there is a limited number of address forms. But often it is only a matter of recognizing that new forms can be created, or that infrequently used ones can be used in new ways. As Wittermans has documented, in a period of rapid social change, forms of address are among those linguistic forms which most clearly and immediately reflect that change (1967:48). It will be suggested in these pages that other causes also contribute to change in address forms, and that whatever the cause new forms are deserving of careful study.

It follows from this that a priori assumptions regarding which forms of address will prove to be significant in a given situation are self-defeating; a researcher with such assumptions is likely to miss anything new or unusual. The use of questionnaires and other techniques designed to gather data quickly from the largest possible sample can only increase the chance that any new developments will either be missed or discounted as insignificant. For certain uses, there is no doubt that questionnaires are the best choice. As Bates and Benigni point out, "the questionnaire responses do reflect what the informants believe to be the ideal system of address" (1975:286). When the ideal system is understood already, as it is for American English, they are of little help.

In her recent study of address forms in India, Bean clearly states the argument against any form of quantification: "No attempt was made to quantify the data: quantification is not an appropriate technique for the elucidation of semantic structures where the rare usage may be as illuminating as common ones" (1978:xv-xvi). Once it is recognized that uncommon address forms are significant, and further, that they are not likely to be revealed in the study of ideal behavior, different methods of research are clearly called for. Certainly the most useful of these is the direct observation of actual behavior. Only when the researcher is able to become an accepted part of the situation can the development of an unusual address form be studied from its inception through its acceptance (or, equally possible, its rejection) within a specific group of people.

In the following pages the development and use of two uncommon forms of address will be presented and analyzed. In order to place these in context, the people, the situation, and the other address forms in use will be described in some detail. As Hymes has suggested, "appropriateness is a relation between sentences and contexts, requiring analysis of both" (1974:156). Without an understanding of the context the need for a new address form would not be apparent; with it generalizations can be made and later tested in other situations.

Before continuing, a brief note on what this paper does not include. It is a discussion of forms of address (used in speaking directly to someone), but not of forms of reference (used in speaking about someone). They are held by this author to be distinct categories, each worthy of separate consideration. And it is a discussion of personal names as forms of address almost exclusively. The other possible types of address usually studied are kinterms, pronouns, and status markers. Of these, kinterms were not applicable to the

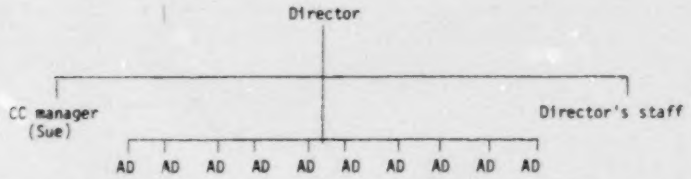
situation, pronouns in English do not convey information on status or intimacy, and status markers simply were not found in this situation, although they certainly would have been one possible option.

Context

The setting is a large business organization. Of primary concern is the office of the Director, made up of the Director, ten Associate Directors, supporting staff members, and secretaries. The Director has two staff members (each with their own secretary), an administrative assistant (a clerical position just above that of secretary), and a secretary. Each Associate Director has at least one secretary; the majority also have one or more staff members.

The administrative assistant to one of the Associate Directors, Sue, will be the focus of this paper due to her use of unusual forms of address. She has worked for the same Associate Director for nine years, starting as his secretary. She is a woman in her late-thirties, extremely well-organized and efficient. When a vacancy as manager of the Committee Control (CC) office occurred, she applied for, and was given, the job.

The job she accepted has an ambiguous position in the organizational hierarchy. There are ways in which Sue is now in a position "parallel" to that of the Associate Directors; however, there are just as many ways in which her position is unequal to theirs. The most important way in which Sue's position is equal to that of the Associate Directors is that she is now, as they are, accountable only to the Director or a member of his immediate staff. An abbreviated version of the organizational chart follows.



Just as the Director's own supporting staff members are in a sense outside of the main flow of information and responsibility in the organization, so is the CC manager.

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The reason the manager of CC has such a high place in the organizational hierarchy is that she has direct contact with the public. Nearly all of the work in the office is repetitive, mundane, and often simple to the point of being boring. But on occasion a situation will occur which poses a potential problem. If the wrong decision is made, the result will be adverse publicity for the organization as a whole. And so the primary qualifications for this job are the ability to efficiently organize and process a large amount of routine work, in conjunction with the ability to immediately recognize and correctly resolve the few potential problems. So that these potential problems might be immediately brought to the attention of the Director, the CC office is placed under his personal control.

That Sue's new job has status similar to that of the Associate Directors' in reality, and not just on paper, can be demonstrated in several ways. First, within a year of taking the job she succeeded in nearly doubling the physical size of the office by moving it across the hall. Second, in the same time period, she increased the size of her staff from three people to five. In an organization where additional space and employees are in constant demand, CC was granted both.

It must be recognized that by requesting additional people and space, Sue put herself in direct, although certainly passive, competition with the Associate Directors. There is only a limited amount of space available in the present building, and since there are no plans to move to another building in the near future, only as many people can be hired as fit into the available space. The result is that the Director could agree to grant increased space and additional employees to CC only if he at the same time denied them to one of the Associate Directors (they being the only others with the authority to ask for either space or additional staff).

Furthermore, by gaining space and employees, Sue not only demonstrated her status, she actually increased it. First, she proved herself willing to enter into competition with the Associate Directors,and able to win. Second, by becoming responsible for a larger space and more people, she increased the prestige of both CC and its manager, for in an environment of limited resources, the larger an office, and the more numerous its staff, the more important it is considered to be.

In contrast to the ways in which Sue has a position equaling that of the Associate Directors, there are many ways in which she is clearly not their equal. Some of these are intrinsic to the job, and others are due to the characteristics of the particular person holding that job. Of

the former, the most significant can be called the "area of responsibility." That is to say, decisions made in CC have virtually no impact on either the policy decisions or the day-to-day management of the institution (these being the primary concerns of everyone else in the building).

This fact leads to several results, the most important of which is that Sue has no legitimate, business-oriented reason for daily contact with anyone else in the building, neither the Associate Directors, their staff members and secretaries, nor the Director. In some ways equal to the Associate Directors, she is in fact separated from them by a lack of common interests. She has never gotten to know many of the staff members, and has no reason to now. Formerly on good terms with all the secretaries, she is no longer one of their number. And although contact with her boss, the Director, is both present and legitimate, the amount of such contact is severely limited. This is not to say that Sue has no contact with anyone in the building outside of her own staff; the point is that she has virtually no legitimate, work-oriented contact. For all practical purposes, CC functions independently of the rest of the building.

Of lesser importance, but still significant, are problems with the location of the office, and the type of staff working for Sue. It has been noted that she was able to increase both physical space and staff, but impressive as this is, quantity of space and people is not the only important consideration. Looking first at the question of space, CC is located on the third floor of the building. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the location, but the Director is located on the first floor, and the space closest to him is viewed as being the most desirable, and that furthest away least so. Therefore, in a building made up of three floors, to be on the third floor has unfavorable connotations. (One of the Associate Directors is on the third floor, but the others are either on the first or second floors.)

An additional problem with the particular space assigned to Sue is that she has no private office to call her own. She originally had one, but was able to gain additional staff members only at the expense of having to share her office with them. It should be noted that all of the Associate Directors have private offices, as do many of their staff members.

Looking next at the present staff of CC, differences again appear when they are compared with the staff of the Associate Directors. Each of the Associate Directors has responsibility for at least one staff member (usually male, usually well-educated, usually well-paid) who is hired to help the Associate Director with his many responsibilities, and at least one

secretary. But the CC staff members can all be best described as clerks: they do simple, routine work which Sue, as the manager, oversees. Furthermore, in contrast to the Associate Directors' staff members, they are all female, all have less education, and all are paid correspondingly lower salaries. In addition, Sue has no secretary; she either does her own typing and secretarial duties, or lets whoever has a free moment take over.

Looking now at the characteristics of the person presently holding the job of manager of CC, there are several important factors. One is Sue's age, for she is younger than all of the Associate Directors by at least ten years. Another is her education, for she never went to college, and all of the Associate Directors have either an M.A. or a Ph.D. A third is her sex,[2] for all of the Associate Directors are men. In addition to these, there is the additional factor of her prior history of employment with the organization. She has been a secretary and administrative assistant within the Director's building, rather than coming from a position of authority in another part of the organization, as the Associate Directors have.

If the Associate Directors consider Sue's present job as nothing more than a higher level clerical position, they do have some justification. The woman who had the job before Sue was originally administrative assistant to one of the Associate Directors, and left the job as manager of CC to become administrative assistant to the Director himself. Precedent thus suggests that the position as manager of CC should be considered to be a step above administrative assistant to an Associate Director, and a step below administrative assistant to the Director.

To summarize briefly: Sue has similar status to the Associate Directors by virtue of her place in the organizational hierarchy, and her ability to engage in competition with them and win (demonstrated by her having obtained additional space and staff members); but her status is less than theirs in the area of responsibility, location of her office, type of staff under her, amount of private space, her age, sex, education, and prior career. The result of the combination of these factors is that her position in the organization can best be described as ambiguous. Due to this, choice of which address forms to use is complicated and will be discussed in detail, after the situation within CC is described.

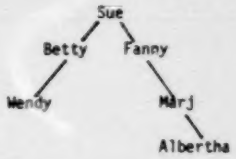
When Sue was appointed manager of CC it consisted of three people, and two crowded rooms connected by a narrow passageway. Not only did the manager not have a private office, she had no more space allotted to her than to

anyone else. Within six months Sue had petitioned for and been granted a larger set of offices across the hall. The initial distribution of space provided one room as the manager's office, and the other as a shared office for the rest of the staff (Fanny, Marj and Albertha). Within another six months Sue had increased her staff by two (Betty and Wendy) and reorganized the office, giving the two new staff members desks in what had been her private office.

Sue is the appointed manager of the office, but Fanny is the acknowledged second in command. She has worked in CC longer than anyone else, remaining through several changes in personnel (mainly changes in those over rather than under her). Marj and Albertha have both been in the office longer than Sue and are accustomed to taking their orders from Fanny. The two rooms are thus in many ways separate from each other, with Fanny occupying the position of greatest authority in her room.

Of the two new employees, Betty was secretary to one of the Director's own staff members, but he left the organization, and the newly-appointed man brought his own secretary with him. Her acceptance of a job in CC was one of the few ways in which she could stay in the building. The other new employee was myself. I had previously worked with Sue under the same Associate Director for three months, and when she changed jobs she asked if I would make the move with her; I spent four weeks with her in the first office, and nearly a year of part-time work in the second.

The relative status of the six people in CC can best be described as a simplified hierarchy, and can be diagrammed in the following manner:



It does not seem important to go into this matter in detail; briefly, relative status within CC depended upon age, as well as current and former areas of responsibility.

Naming Behavior

It is by now an established fact that "the principle option of address in American English is the choice between use of the first name (hereafter abbreviated to FN) and the use of a title with the last name (TLN)" (Brown and Ford, 1961:375). As a result, much of the research on naming behavior has concentrated on the use of these two forms, and the meaning of each in relation to the other. There are three possible patterns of use in a dyad, and these have been analyzed in detail in Brown and Ford (1961:380) and in Slobin, Miller and Porter (1968:291-2). Briefly, they are:

1. Mutual exchange of FN, which has been related to intimacy, informality, and equal status;
2. Mutual exchange of TLN, which has been related to distance and formality; and
3. Non-reciprocal exchange of FN and TLN, where the FN is used to the person of lower status, and the TLN is used to the person of higher status.

Looking at these options, the address system used in American English would seem to be exceedingly simple, being composed of any two people and only three possible patterns of address. As a description of the ideal system, it is no doubt correct, but it is nonetheless misleading, for the actual system used in American English is not nearly so simple. The principle forms of address are not the only ones used, nor do people limit themselves to the convenient dyads postulated by the majority of researchers. Once all of the occurring forms of address are considered, and all of the people in a given environment are included, the system outlined above can no longer be viewed as sufficient and complete.

Obviously the research described in this paper makes no false claim to being a description of the complete repertoire of address forms for all speakers of American English. The claim cannot even be made that all of the address forms used by all of the people within a single building are described. The only thing being attempted is the description of the address forms used by a single person in her relations to others in the building. The point is not to gather all of the existing data, but to describe two unusual pieces of behavior in their context, so that their use may be better understood, in the hopes that this will lead to a further comprehension of how address systems function in everyday life.

There are really two separate parts of the business organization under study to be considered, each in its relation to Sue: the immediate context (the CC office) and the larger context (the building as a whole). The patterns of address in each level of context will be described separately.

Within CC everyone uses FN as their primary form of address to each other and to their manager. It is not used to the exclusion of other forms, however, for no-naming (Ø) (avoiding the use of a name entirely), and TLN also appear, though infrequently. The use of these forms is rare, and seems to depend primarily on the immediate context in which they are found. For example, TLN might occur in a conversation which included a stranger, someone who did not know the staff of CC and would not immediately recognize the use of FN. And in an extended conversation, repeated usage of FN itself becomes marked, and Ø is likely to occur, once the person being addressed has already been named. (This is clearly a different usage of Ø than when it occurs without the addressee having been named at all.) The point is that people rarely find a single address form appropriate for every occasion.

In return, it would appear that Sue can use either of the two principle options, FN or TLN. But her staff members use FN when referring to her, and so for her to use TLN for them would be in contradiction of the status relationship existing between them. Yet for her to accept the use of mutual FN would result in her giving up a certain amount of the status she has so recently earned. And so she has chosen instead to adopt a form common to some situations, but uncommon in business: nicknames (NN). She uses NN for three of the five people under her (a possible explanation for the two exceptions will be given shortly).

Sue has created nicknames for three of her staff: Betty she calls "Betty B" (the first letter of her last name); Wendy she calls "Wendy-Loo" (L being the first letter of her last name) or occasionally "Lendy-Woo" (a simple reversal); and Fanny she calls "Fanny Mae" or "Fanny Maybell" (neither of which have anything to do with her last name). Marj is occasionally called Marjorie (her full name--it is impossible to say here that either should be considered a NN), and Albertha is never called anything else.

The use of nicknames is very complicated: they occur in many forms, on many different occasions, for many reasons. Too few NN appeared in the situation described here for a detailed analysis of them to be presented. Therefore, although it would clearly be desirable to have a classification of the different types, and an analysis of the use and meaning of each,

nothing of the sort can be attempted here. Until further research can be conducted, all the nicknames found will have to be considered essentially equivalent. And what follows must be accepted as only a tentative analysis, subject to later verification.

The use of a single NN is closely related to the use of multiple names (MN). Brown and Ford describe MN as "the case in which two or more versions of the proper name are used in free variation with one another" (1961:378). They have suggested that the use of MN represents a greater degree of intimacy than the use of FN. Assuming that the creation and subsequent use of a NN for a person also represents an increased intimacy, it is possible to interpret Sue's use of NN as an attempt to create a non-reciprocal use of address forms with her staff. This can be expressed in the form of the relationship:

TLN : FN :: FN : NN

To explain: if it is assumed that asymmetric usage of forms of address is related to a difference of rank or status; and if the person with a higher degree of status uses FN to a person of lower status, receiving TLN in return; then it is possible to see the use of FN by someone of lower status to someone of higher status as permitting, or at times even requiring, the use of NN in return, thus assuring that the asymmetric relationship be maintained. At the same time, remembering that the use of NN implies an intimacy between the namer and the one named, the asymmetric relationship of FN : NN is restricted to use between people on intimate terms but of unequal status.

The above is only a hypothesis, but it does make sense in explaining the given situation. It is important that this hypothesis not be considered a necessary cause and effect relationship, such that every time an ambiguous situation of the sort described so far arises the only or even the best solution will be the one that Sue has found. Rather, since this form of address is used in an unusual manner and accepted, the problem is to discover some of the causes of its usage and acceptance.

Sue's symmetrical usage of FN with two members of her staff can now be explained as indicative of the fact that she is not on intimate personal terms with them, as is indeed the case. This leads to the suggestion that intimacy is a more important consideration in choice of address forms than is status. Support for this suggestion is provided by the two following examples of NN usage outside of CC.

The first example involves the staff member to the Associate Director for whom Sue worked previously. He began to use a NN ("Fru-Fru") instead of FN as his principle form of address for Sue. Utilizing the rules previously suggested, it would seem that he indicates two things by this choice. One is that he has more status than Sue, which he certainly did at the time she worked in that office. The other is that they are on close personal terms, which they are not. Thus he is breaking the unstated rules, and reversing the order of priority in which they should be used. For this reason Sue's reaction of intense dislike is readily explained. If he were merely reiterating his position of status as being above hers, she could not object. But since he is implying a personal relationship which does not exist, she has justification for objecting. (The result of her negative reaction is that he has decreased usage of the NN, although even when she left the office he did not completely discontinue it.)

The second example involves another staff member, working for a different Associate Director. He has greater status than Sue, but they are friends, and she has created a NN for him. His name is Dr. Charles McElroy, and she calls him "Moctor Darly." Possibly because of the specific attributes of this NN (it has a double exchange of letters, it has a pleasing sound, and it cannot be confused with any specific English words) it has not only been accepted by the person named but is occasionally used by several others in the building as well.[3]

It is time now to look at the larger context, the building as a whole. The primary form of address used for Sue by virtually everyone is FN. For some this is the reciprocal FN of equal status, for others it is the non-reciprocal FN of unequal status. As with the staff of CC, other address forms occur occasionally in certain situations, but this serves only as proof that no matter what the ideal system, in reality it is rare to find a single address form appropriate 100% of the time. (This holds true for all the cases discussed below as well, of course.)

The Director is Sue's immediate boss, and in accordance with his clearly higher status and the lack of intimacy between them, Sue uses TLN as her form of address for him. This is clearly the expected form, and as such its use is unmarked. For the secretaries, who are Sue's friends, and with whom she has used the FN of equal status for so long, she continues to use a reciprocal FN. Again, this is the expected, unmarked form. For the staff members, her choice depends on the status and degree of intimacy

with each as an individual: depending on the balance of these variables she uses FN, TLN, NN, or Ø as her primary forms of address. Since she has so little contact with the staff members, form of address does not pose a very serious problem: when contact does occur it is usually brief and for these occasions Ø is always available.

It is only when speaking with the Associate Directors that Sue has a problem in the choice of address. As their equal, in all the ways previously mentioned, she would legitimately call the Associate Directors by their FN, as they call each other. But choice of FN would be likely to antagonize: since there are so many ways in which she is not their equal, it would be thought presumptive. As a person of lesser status, in all those ways previously mentioned, she should use TLN. But this choice is no better: since there are some ways in which Sue is their equal, she is justified in using something more intimate. Choice of either form would indicate what Sue views her status to be, and how she wishes others to view her.

The option of NN, which Sue has used successfully within CC, cannot be used with the Associate Directors, for she does not know them well enough individually to overcome the status difference. The most common choice in a situation of ambiguity is Ø, as Ervin-Tripp has suggested (1972:221). Use of this form as by graduate students to their professors, as a means of transition, after they stop using TLN and before they begin using FN has been analyzed by McIntire (1972). Certainly this form was frequently used by Sue, but if Ø is used to the exclusion of other direct forms of address it can become awkward and stilted after a short time.

Since there was really no other standard alternative available, Sue invented her own. More exactly, as with her use of NN, she adopted a form available for occasional use in a different situation. In this case, she took first name and last name (FN + LN) as her standard form of address with the Associate Directors. This form is rarely used as a direct address form in American English, although it does occasionally appear as a means of emphasis. This use is favored by parents 'manding' their children, as in the example, "Mary Beth Goodman, you come inside right this minute!" (see Brown and Ford, 1961:182). Key has suggested that it may also be used as a salutation in a letter if the relationship between addressee and addressor is ambiguous (1975:48). More often FN + LN appears as a form of reference, although its use is not consistent, as pointed out by Adler (1978:184).

It should be mentioned that when FN + LN is used, whether by Sue in this situation or by others in different situations, the FN is usually the full name. That is, if a person's name is Charles, but he is usually called Charlie or Chuck, when FN + LN is used he will be called Charles + LN. This serves as a means of emphasis, and increases the oddity of the form, for as Brown and Ford have suggested, "male first names in American English very seldom occur in full form" (1961:376). The same is probably true for female first names as well.

The form FN + LN is so uncommon that its usage is highly marked. Ervin-Tripp has pointed out that: "When there is agreement about the normal, unmarked address form to alters of unspecified status, then any shift is a message" (1961:61). It would seem that even in a situation where alters have unspecified status, and there is only agreement about what the normal, unmarked address forms are, a shift is no less significant a message. Further, it is apparent from the present situation that amount of usage by a single person does not change the fact that a given form is marked. Thus, no matter how often Sue calls the Associate Directors by FN + LN, it still remains a marked form of address. This is demonstrated by the fact that Sue's usage of the form seems to be accompanied by paralinguistic features which clearly separate it from the rest of the sentence in which it occurs. (Unfortunately I was not able to analyze this at the time, so cannot provide further details.)

This markedness may be one reason why Sue can continue to use this form of address. Every time she uses the form she calls attention to her ambiguous status position, and forces the person she addresses to recognize it. This legitimatizes her use of an unusual form of address: it serves a specific function for her which no other form would serve as well. Everyone in the building knows that her position of status is ambiguous, so rather than try to ignore the fact, she calls attention to it. She is breaking the established unspoken rules for address, but in such a way that everyone can continue to permit her to do it.

It is possible to analyze the reasons why everyone continues to permit Sue to use this alternative even more closely. She has previously shown that she knows what the rules for proper forms of address are, so that her usage of an unusual form does not indicate merely a mistake which should be corrected. Only someone who has proven knowledge of the rules would be permitted to break them so blatantly. More important, only one who was well

aware of what the rules were could break them with such proficiency. If she did not know the rules, she would break them at times when it would not serve a useful purpose, as does the man who continues to call her by NN. Further, it is possible that only in a situation where there is a paradox which calls for an unusual solution, such as Sue's apparent versus her actual status, would she be permitted to break the rules. By her solution she has found a way to minimize any negative reactions she might otherwise cause, if she used either FN before it was acceptable or TLN when it was too formal. The Associate Directors are perceptive men, and are fully aware of Sue's problem. That they accept her solution probably plays an important part in her continued usage of FN + LN. If they refused to accept it, she could not longer use it, for it would then serve a negative rather than a positive function.

Brown and Ford have suggested that "in the progression towards intimacy of unequals the superior is always the pacesetter initiating new moves in that direction" (1961:389). It is important to recognize as well that once the superior uses FN, it is then up to the person of lower status to interpret whether reciprocal FN or non-reciprocal TLN is expected in return. Due to this the progression towards intimacy should really be considered a mutual decision. In this way Sue initiated the progression, by her use of any address form other than TLN, but the Associate Directors agreed to the change by accepting her use of the new form. It is apparent that Sue felt uncomfortable using the reciprocal FN, and so created a new form as an intermediary step between FN and TLN.

One consideration in her choice of the new form may have been that it had no implications already attached, as would the use of either FN or TLN. That is, FN and TLN are clearly linked to additional meanings of status and intimacy, whereas the use of a new form could not be. As a result, the participants in the situation had to agree upon the new implications to be assigned the new form. These were suggested by Sue (ambiguous status, lack of intimacy) and accepted by the others. That this at no time had to be verbalized is a tribute to the influence of context over linguistic form.

Conclusion

Perhaps it is because forms of address seem to be discrete entities that they have so often been treated as separable from the context in which they occur. Whatever the reason, the assumption of this paper has been that

in order to understand any but the most common behavior, forms of address, like so many other subjects, are best studied in context.

It has been shown that one cause of the use of unusual forms of address may be an ambiguous status position in an organization. In this particular situation, the result was the use of NN to those of ambiguous (somewhat lower) status but high intimacy, and the use of FN + LN to those of ambiguous (somewhat higher) status but low intimacy. Two transitional steps, to be used in making finer distinctions between levels of status and intimacy,were thus added to the available options of address in American English.

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Footnotes

1. For further discussion of this notion see Goffman's explanation of a "medley of voices" (1967:61) and Berreman's description of "segments of social selves" (1972:574).

2. It is recognized that sex is clearly a factor in this situation, but as it is only one of many it is not discussed in great detail. For further readings on the role of sex as a variable in the use of address forms, see Key (1975), Kramer (1975), and Thorne and Henley (1975).

3. It would be interesting to follow this up, but unfortunately at the time I did not pay sufficient attention to the spread of this NN, and so cannot document it here.

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